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ABSTRACT

The State of Arkansas, through legislation, has set new standards for schools of education. The new standards mandate changes affecting the following: (1) National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approval for all teacher education programs in the state; (2) general education requirements for education students that are the same as in other baccalaureate degree programs; (3) the need for students to select a concentration, (K-3) or (4-6), within an elementary education program; (4) the need to establish equivalent degree requirements in an academic major for secondary students; (5) early evaluation of potential education students; (6) experiences sequenced for students; and (7) more careful monitoring of student teaching. In addition, the National Teacher Examination (NTE) Pre-Professional Skills Test will be required for admission to the teacher education program as well as other criteria. Programs will be held accountable for the pass rate on different sections of the NTE. Institutions failing to maintain an 80 percent pass rate will be placed on probationary status for 3 years. (Author/JD)

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Approval of Teacher Education: The Arkansas Model

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Abstract

Reform and change are trends in education today. From public schools to the schools of education in colleges and universities, new standards are being implemented. Following this trend, Arkansas, through legislative Act 110, has set new standards for schools of education. The new standards mandate changes affecting the following: (A) NCATE approval for all teacher education programs in the state, (B) general education requirements for education students that are the same as in other baccalaureate degree programs, (C) the need for a student to select a concentration, (K-3) or (4-6), within an elementary education program, (D) the need to establish equivalent degree requirements in an academic major for secondary students, (E) early evaluation of potential education students, (F) experiences sequenced for students and (G) more careful monitoring of student teaching. In addition, the NTE Pre-Professional Skills Test will be required for admission to the teacher education program as well as other criteria.

Programs will be held accountable for the pass rate on different sections of the NTE. Institutions failing to maintain an 80 percent pass rate will be placed on probationary status for three years.

Other states report similar standards. Various states include NCATE accreditation of programs as well as other criteria.

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Arkansas Program Approval
For Teacher Education

The events which precipitated the examination of the state approval of teacher education began with litigation addressing the constitutionality of the current method of financing public schools in Arkansas. Eleven school districts brought the class action suit against Jim DuPree and other members of the Arkansas State Board of Education charging that the present system violates the state constitution's guarantee of equal protection and its requirement that the state provide a general, suitable, and efficient system of education. Judge Harold Simpson ruled in favor of this suit, and it was affirmed recently by the Arkansas Supreme Court (DuPree vs. Alma School District, 1983). This question of financing led to the calling of the First Extraordinary Session of the Seventy-Fourth General Assembly.

This 1983 session of the General Assembly, devoted entirely to public education, passed thirty-three acts of legislation. One of these thirty-three acts of legislation was Act 110. This act was to insure that the financial commitment made by passage of the one cent sales tax devoted to the improvement of education will get the citizens of Arkansas the quality they would like to have; because of strong concerns voiced by the public, parents and teaching professionals in both public schools and institutions of higher education, Act 110 was passed. The legislative charge was to review and make recommendations in three areas: teacher education programs in Arkansas which graduate teachers, requirements for a state certificate which is needed by an individual in order to be hired for a position, and on-going evaluation of teachers and administrators.

The act also provided for a Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee to advise the State Board of Education on standards for the certification and professional development of public school teachers and administrators.

The Governor appointed the twenty-one member committee which has a statutorily mandated composition of eight teachers, five administrators, three teacher educators, two lay persons, a student member in a teacher education program and two ex-officio members. The committee is an on-going committee, and members serve staggered terms of one to three years.

The committee, in attempting to determine whether there are in fact inadequacies in Arkansas teacher education programs, reviewed literally hundreds of pages of information including NCATE standards, reports from all Arkansas institutions of higher education which have teacher education programs, and recent studies and requirements from other states. These studies led the committee to several broad conclusions. Generally, the committee was pleased to find that fifteen of Arkansas' teacher education programs are currently meeting NCATE standards, and that requirements for acceptance into, retention in, and graduation from the programs usually match and occasionally exceed requirements for students in other baccalaureate programs.

However, the committee also concluded that there are a number of steps which would measurably strengthen teacher education programs in Arkansas. It is the committee's intention that each institution which offers a

teacher education program be held strictly accountable for developing and maintaining a college/university-wide, high quality teacher education program (Arkansas Teacher Education, Certification, and Evaluation Committee, 1984).

On August 20, 1985 the Arkansas Department of Education formed a Blue Ribbon Committee to help develop an approval and review process for teacher education programs. This seventy member committee composed of representatives from the sixteen institutions of higher education in Arkansas studied program approval of teacher education and made recommendations to the Arkansas Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee.

Consequently on September 8, 1986 the State Board of Education adopted the following policies in teacher education and certification. These policies will govern the State Approval of Teacher Education Programs. In all cases, appropriate documentation for State approval is required. If not otherwise noted, the policies become effective for those members of the 1987 fall, college/university freshman class who subsequently seek admission to a teacher education program. As often as may be necessary, the Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee will review the implementation of these "Requirements for State Approval of Teacher Education Programs" and recommend any changes to the State Board of Education for approval.

1. Teacher Education programs seeking State approval must be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

2. Students pursuing a teacher education program shall meet, as a minimum, the same general education requirements as for other Baccalaureate Degree programs.

3. Students pursuing an Elementary Education program leading to a K-6 certification shall complete a core program* applicable to K-6 teacher preparation. Students shall also select an area of concentration of either Early Childhood (K-3) or Upper Elementary (4-6). The professional studies component shall provide experiences and exposure at both levels.

4. Secondary Education candidates shall complete a course of study that includes meeting the institutional requirements for an academic major in a teaching field. Degree requirements are determined by the institutions, but in no instance should the requirements for the major be substantially different from the requirements for the non-teacher education student seeking a degree in the same major. The professional studies component shall provide experiences and exposure at both the junior and senior levels.

5. Teacher education students shall be evaluated early in their program to determine their potential for teaching. At the freshman and/or sophomore level, prospective teacher education students shall receive an introduction to teaching as a profession and exposure to teaching situations through observation and experience.

*Minimum 1-6 certification curriculum required by Department of Education.

6. With the exception of an introductory course/experience, the professional studies component of teacher education shall be provided only at the upper division level (junior, senior).

7. The professional studies component of the teacher education program shall provide the student with sequenced experiences working under direct supervision, in teams, and independently. The professional preparation of the teacher education student shall include cross cultural understandings; classroom observation; micro-teaching (videotaped small group teaching experience); developing case studies of individual students; translating theory into practice; curriculum design and development; access and retrieval of print materials; the use of instructional technology; field-based experiences; and assuming student teaching responsibility.

8. The professional studies component of the teacher education program shall include direct, substantial, quality participation in teaching over an extended period of time in a cooperating school setting (practicum). The practicum shall be under the supervision of college personnel who are experienced in and have continuing experience with elementary or secondary teaching, and personnel from the cooperating school who are certified and experienced. Explicit criteria shall be established and applied cooperatively by college and school personnel for the selection of school supervisors and for the assignment of college personnel. Practicum sites shall be previsited by college

personnel, and the selection criteria shall ensure that the sites provide teacher education students optimum opportunity for professional development in the field-based setting.
The practicum, a field experience planned jointly by the cooperating schools and college/university, shall be for a duration of no less than twelve complete weeks. The practicum field experience shall be guided by a cooperating teacher and a teacher education faculty. (Effective September, 1988)

9. Teacher education candidates shall demonstrate proficiency in written, oral communications and mathematics skills as one requirement for admission to a teacher education program. To implement this policy, the following schedule applies:
   - Beginning with the 1987 spring semester, college/university students seeking admission to a teacher education program shall take the NTE Pre-Professional Skills Test. Students are required to have test results submitted to the college/university teacher education program and to the Arkansas Department of Education. At the end of the 1986-87 academic year, the Department of Education shall initiate a validation study of the Pre-Professional Skills Test. The validation study shall be presented to the Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee for discussion and recommendations to the State Board of Education. The determined minimum score will become one requirement for admission to a teacher education program. (Effective September, 1988)

Other assessment techniques of admission to a teacher education program shall include interviews, recommendations, a cumulative grade point average of no less than 2.5 (4.00 scale) and completion with no less than a grade of C (or equivalent) in general education courses identified by the college/university in written communications, oral communications and mathematics skills. Students are required to satisfy all admission requirements before full admission to a teacher education program is achieved. Students may not participate in the field-based practicum before satisfying all admission requirements and achieving admission to the teacher education program.

REGULATIONS REGARDING THE NCATE ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENT FOR STATE APPROVAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The State approval of teacher education programs includes the following requirements:

- All institutions/programs accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and meeting all other State requirements, will be considered approved by the State to offer teacher education programs.
- Institutions seeking to initiate teacher education programs after meeting certain State requirements, will receive State approval for a period of no longer than the next regulary scheduled NCATE review or five years, whichever comes first. Graduates of an institution or any teacher education program offered by the institution will not be eligible for certification if the institution or program has not achieved NCATE accreditation by the end of the five-year period.

- Institutions or any program offered by the institution failing to receive NCATE accreditation or which did not submit an existing program for NCATE review, will continue to enjoy State approval, if it has met specific State requirements, for a period of no longer than three years. If NCATE Accreditation is not achieved within the three-year period, the State approval will expire and the institution or affected programs will no longer be recognized or approved by the State. Students admitted to the program during the three-year probationary period will be eligible for certification. At the expiration of the three-year period if NCATE accreditation is not obtained, the graduates of such programs will not be eligible for State certification. Under these conditions, institutions as a commitment to the profession and to Arkansas students, should not admit new students to the affected teacher education programs.
- An institution or any of its programs failing to receive NCATE accreditation may, at a time of the institution's choosing, petition the State and NCATE to initiate the process for obtaining NCATE accreditation and State approval.

Teacher education approval requires institutional accreditation by the appropriate regional accrediting association prior to submitting petition for seeking NCATE accreditation and State approval.

CERTIFICATION TESTS REQUIREMENTS

Effective September 1, 1986, applicants seeking certification in the Special Education areas of Mildly Handicapped K-12, Moderately/Profoundly

Handicapped K-12, and Severely Emotionally Disturbed K-12, shall take the NTE Special Education speciality test. The applicant shall report the test results to the college/university from which training was completed and to the Arkansas Department of Education. At the end of the 1986-87 academic year, the Department of Education shall initiate and complete a validation study. The validation study shall be presented to the Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee for discussion and recommendations to the State Board of Education. The determined minimum score will become one eligibility requirement for receiving certification as Special Education teacher. (Effective fall semester, 1988)

The Arkansas Department of Education shall immediately initiate a validation study of the Professional Knowledge Test of the NTE Core Battery Tests. The validation study shall be presented to the Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee for discussion and recommendations to the State Board of Education. (Effective fall semester, 1988). The determined minimum score shall become a requirement of all applicants seeking certification as a teacher effective fall semester, 1988.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

From among those students completing a teacher education program, institutions shall maintain an 80 per cent pass rate on the Professional Knowledge Test of the National Teacher's Examination Core Battery tests. A pass rate of less than 80 per cent requires that the teacher education program be placed on a probationary status for a period of no more than

three years. The probationary status ends when the 80 per cent pass rate is achieved. However, teacher education programs failing to achieve the 80 per cent pass rate at the end of the three-year probationary period will not be recognized by the Arkansas Department of Education as a state approved program.

From among the students completing a teacher education program, institutions shall maintain an 80 per cent pass rate on each National Teacher's Examination specialty area test. Failure to maintain an 80 per cent pass rate on any one specialty area test places the affected program(s) on a three-year probationary status. The probationary status ends when the 80 per cent pass rate is achieved. However, a specialty area program failing to achieve the 80 per cent pass rate at the end of the three-year probationary period will not be recognized by the Arkansas Department of Education as a state approved program. (Directors Memo, 1986)

National accreditation of college and university units for the preparation of all teachers and other professional school personnel at the elementary and secondary levels is the sole responsibility of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). This national accreditation evaluates the preparation of K-12 professional educators within institutions. Regional accreditation evaluates institutions as entities, rather than as separate programs or specialty units while state approval is a governmental activity which requires all professional education programs within the state to meet minimum standards of quality in order for their graduates to be eligible for their state certification.

The purpose is to assure that those who are to be certified have completed adequate preparation programs. In those states with state approval systems, this is a prerequisite for eligibility to begin the accreditation process. States having a program approval process have their programs approved by the state agency(ies) and supply NCATE with the latest approval letters from the agency(ies) to show that state-mandated standards have been met. This can greatly reduce the reporting load for institutions that desire both state and NCATE approval.

We surveyed West Virginia, Florida, Oklahoma, South Carolina, North Dakota, Kentucky, Delaware, and Wisconsin. The consensus of most states is that the NCATE or NASDTEC (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification) standards are acceptable accrediting measures with which to measure teaching standards. The states of Florida, South Carolina and North Dakota, use a combination of NCATE and NASDTEC while Delaware uses only NASDTEC. Kentucky, a member of the Southern Association, uses only NCATE standards with no other accrediting agencies involved.

Several states have designed their own programs. West Virginia is in the process of completing its own approval program to be accredited by the State Department. Oklahoma has a similar program with no outside accrediting agency involved. Wisconsin at one time used NCATE standards but has designed its own program with state accreditation by the Department of Education in Wisconsin.

Florida will accept certification from either states affiliated with NCATE - NASDTEC only if there is a joint agreement in force. This agreement now covers about 27 or 28 states.

Across the United States, various states are reflecting changes and reform in teacher education. Arkansas is one of those states implementing new standards and demands. Impetus for change come from a class action suit addressing the constitutionality of public school financing. From there, Act 110 was passed which addressed changes in teacher education. These new standards will have far-reaching effects on the future of students of education as well as schools of education.

REFERENCES

Arkansas Teacher Education, Certification and Evaluation Committee, (1984), Report submitted to the Arkansas State Board of Education, December, 1984, pages 4-13.

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DuPree v. Alma School District, (1983), No. 82-175, Supreme Court of Arkansas.